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PREVENTION OF IMMORALITY:

25.

A Paper

READ AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CHURCH
PENITENTIARY ASSOCIATION.

ASCENSION DAY,
1877.

THE LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER

PERMITS HIS OPINION, AS GIVEN BELOW, TO BE PRINTED.

“Your pamphlet is directed to the object of lessening an evil which threatens to destroy all moral and social good amongst us.

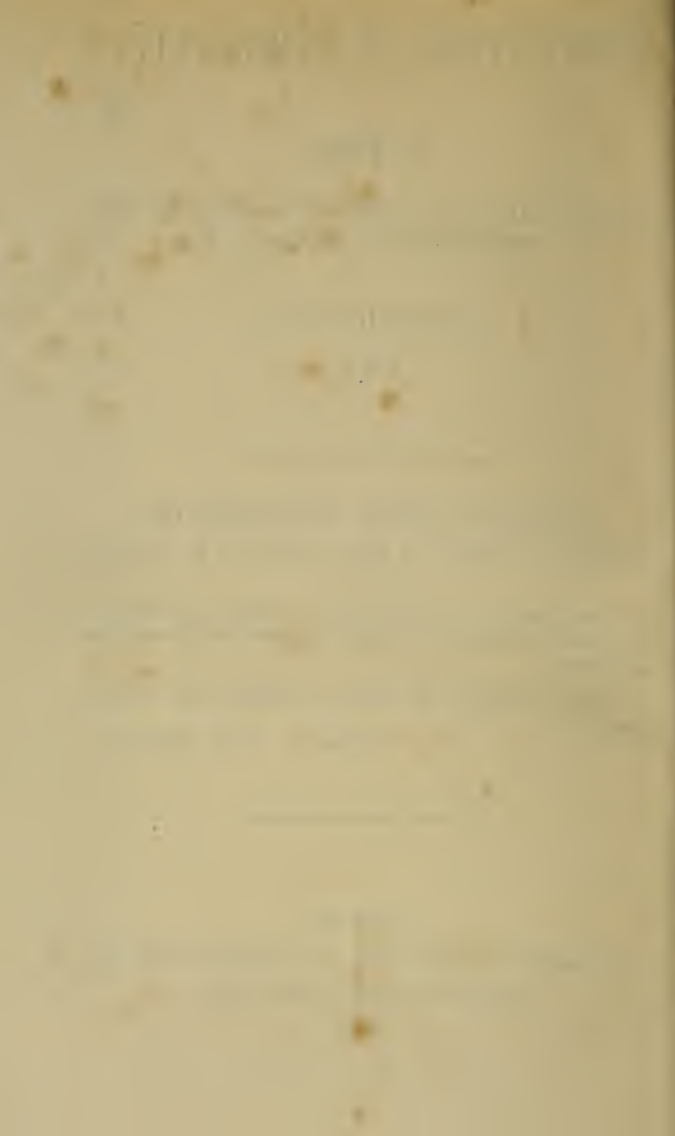
“I hope it may be the means of helping many to guard against it.

“(Signed) E. H. WINTON.”

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1877.



PREVENTION OF IMMORALITY.

THOUGH it is at present a fundamental rule of this Association that no work shall be undertaken except the "Promoting and aiding the establishment and maintenance of Penitentiaries and Houses of Refuge," I cannot but think that it ought to lie within its province to give encouragement to any means for the promotion of chastity, either by way of cure or prevention of impurity. The Association might invite papers bearing upon the subject, to be read and discussed at the annual meetings, and this would give to Associates an opportunity for exchange of opinions, and of hearing of many ways of being useful in the cause, which might not be presented to them by any other means. I submit that this would not interfere with the rules, and would not commit the Association to any action beyond its assumed scope.

Work for the cure of any evil naturally suggests to workers a desire to be able to do something towards prevention of that evil, and more especially with regard to the sin of impurity, prevention is decidedly better than cure, if it is only practicable; for it has the advantage of saving with clean garments the would be sinner, before he has made a plunge into all the filth of an unchaste life, and has had the opportunity of drawing others after him. Many a penitent man or woman, who looks back upon years of an

impure life, would give all but his soul to be able to undo the harm he has done to others, in tempting them to sin against chastity. Prevention would cut at its source the stream of vice which our Association attempts to deal with lower down, when it is stronger and has a much more rapid flow. People who sneer at the work of penitentiaries, and many who, without sneering at it, are not sanguine about its success, tell us that when we save one woman we are but making a vacancy in the ranks of prostitution which is immediately filled by another, because the law of supply and demand must be obeyed, and always tends to balance evenly. In reply to such a challenge I would say, "go to the fountain head and strike at the demand." It is impossible to handle this subject with any effect without understanding all its bearings, and one cannot speak out about it without alluding to matters which are in themselves extremely loathsome. But "to the pure all things are pure," and the way to go about the cure of a bad drain is not to cover it up, and to burn pastilles and scatter rose water around, but to take it up and clear it, to flush it with pure water, and to admit pure air into it. This sin of impurity is sapping the manhood of the nation, physically as well as morally. I have known nearly half (amounting to 300 men) of a man-of-war's crew to be at one time suffering one of the penalties of debauchery. I have known, during my experience as an Instructor in the "Britannia," some years ago, boys of 14 who were in the same condition; and knowing what I do, and feeling that it is possible to do something in the way of

stemming this frightful torrent, is it wonderful that I should come to you, and stretch out my hands to you, and cry to you, each Associate individually, to help me in my task, and take up the idea I put forth, that boys should be carefully prepared by parents, guardians, pastors preparing them for Confirmation, and by all who have influence with or responsibility for them, to encounter the fearful trials and pitfalls in the shape of temptations to impurity which they will find in their path directly they go out into the world.

Picture to yourself an innocent boy of 14, who has been brought up to a great extent at home, carefully guarded from all that is vicious, the pride of his mother and sisters, not by any means a milksop, but good at cricket and football, and holding his own at athletic sports, the sort of lad of whom any one might be proud, full of bright hope and fair promise. This boy goes, we will say, to sea. He hears on board the training ship many things that shock him, and bring an honest blush to his cheek ; but, never having been prepared for such talk, he scarcely understands what is meant. He is passed on to a sea-going man-of-war. There he goes ashore on leave with one or two of his new messmates, lads of 18 or 19. They dine together, drink more wine than is good for them, smoke cigars (forbidden luxuries on board the training ship), go on to the theatre or a music hall, enter into talk and raillery with what appear to be very pretty young ladies, well known to the elder lads ; after the performance they all go to see these young ladies safely to their

home ; the poor raw youngster, excited by liquor and half stupefied by tobacco, not dreaming of the reality of the case, is taken along with them, the elder lads chuckling at the fun of thus compassing the ruin of their innocent messmate, and—you may easily imagine the rest, “ He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks.” The same story, with minor modifications, might be told of the lad entering the army, a merchant’s or a lawyer’s office in any of our great towns, or even at the public schools ; also of medical students, though the latter are, from their few extra years, less likely to begin their career with innocence. The means and opportunities vary, the pitfalls are differently decorated and masked, but are the same at the bottom. And so the world goes on. The boys are corrupted, and they in their turn soon get hardened to vice.

Many a lad is very much overcome with shame after his first fall, when he begins to realise what he has done, when he thinks of the pure bright home far away, of the tender mother and loving sisters who were justly proud of the noble boy who had so lately gone forth into the world, of the purity and sweetness of all he has left ; whilst he himself, with aching head and enervated frame, is just realising that he is in as different a place to that as hell is to heaven. Many a lad has felt, at that time, in a state ready to hang himself, but months later he has recked nothing of all this. Habit has blunted feeling. He resolutely puts away from him all thoughts of home when he starts for his debauch, and he is now ready to help

in the downfall of others, and in sneering at those who struggle, as some few do, to keep their virtue. One great means of temptation to lads has been much reduced by the Contagious Diseases Acts. When I went to sea, thirty years ago, a midshipman in uniform could not walk along any of the principal streets of Portsmouth, Plymouth, or other such places, after dark, without being called after, and even pulled and pushed about, by street walkers. I was in Portsmouth one evening about a year and a half ago, when I found the streets quite different from what I used to see ; I actually walked unnecessarily to and fro, after my first surprise, and was astonished at the quietness and decency ; I thought of the pandemonium they used to present at 10 p.m. in old days, and I thanked God for the change. Still many other snares remain, as bad as, if not worse than, they ever were, and shall we weakly let the devil have his own way with the young lads who are now growing up? Shall we be justified in leaving untried any means in our power to save these poor boys, our sons and nephews, and those of our friends and others, from these pitfalls? There is no use in merely wishing that people were good, and deploring all the wickedness of the world. We must try what we each and all can do with God's help to bring about a better state of things. If we fail utterly no harm can be done, and each single soul saved is worth all the toil.

Remember that by saving the boys we are also saving their victims ; we are, under God, coming between the innocent girl and her possible seducer, we are aiming at altering the way in which these

crimes are now looked at, and forming a more healthy tone in society. The grand stumbling-block in the way is *mistaken prudery*. I hold that true purity should be pictured as looking up to heaven, looking upward with heart bare to her Lord's eye, with white dress, unsoiled by the touch of the stained hands that cling to it for help, braving filth and vileness of every shade for the love of the Redeemer who came to save sinners, and counting everything but dust if she may only lead the lost ones to His feet. Why should there be such a patent contradiction as the way in which vice itself is condoned by the world, whilst the very subject must not be mentioned in what is called "mixed company?" Is it not strange that men who do not like the idea of warning their sons against temptations of impurity, on the score of its "putting bad thoughts into their heads," will laugh at a nasty story or an obscene jest, and see no great harm in associating with men whom they know to be living an immoral life? Let all false prudery be cast aside, let this matter be boldly faced, and the task of cleansing society at large will be comparatively easy. Let fathers, guardians, and pastors look upon it as a solemn and necessary duty to prepare the boys' minds for what they will have to encounter. Let them first point out the wickedness of the sin itself (treating it as a *sin* and not as a peccadillo), both towards God, towards their own bodies as the temples of the Holy Ghost, and towards the wretched women who are the instruments of such guilt.

Secondly, let them set before the lads the shame and insult it would be to company with prostitutes,

and then to meet their mothers and sisters, the shudder with which, if they knew all, those dear ones would receive their contaminated embraces. A boy should always be told that he should, whenever he is about to go to any doubtful place or into questionable company, ask himself if his mother would like to see him there. This spring may act upon many who would be impervious to the first. They can better realize the idea of mothers and sisters, whom they have seen, than the idea of God, whom they have not seen. Mark well that I do not prefer the lower motive, but say that we must take humanity as we find it, and use the means most likely to influence for good in varying natures and constitutions.

Then I would guide even the earlier years, before the naked truth need be set before the boy, by teaching him the true knightly feeling of perfect courtesy to *all* women, Queen, peeress, servant-maid, and old woman in the cottage. If a boy's whole life is trained on a system, you have better materials to work on when the time of preparation comes for going into the world. Tell the little boy the tales of old chivalry, of Arthur, the "selfless man and stainless gentleman," of chaste Percivale, and pure Galahad, and, fiction though it be, it will help to mould the plastic mind of the child, and when the child is a lad, and must be told of the wicked world before him, then impress on the heart that has been imbued with a tender chivalrous feeling towards all women—how base and cowardly, how unknighly it would be, to sully the fair fame of a woman, or to be in any way the means of degrading her, or of per-

petuating her degradation if already stained. This earlier work may be done by the mother, even better than by the father.

The mother's name should be, and is to many men in after life, a bright chord of memory, often the only one that binds him to purity and light, and keeps him from being quite as vile as he would have been without it. Fathers and mothers should realise to themselves how much depends on the early training of their children, and, at all risks and sacrifices, never hand it entirely over to hired teachers, be they ever so capable. They, in that case, lose to a great extent their influence over the children, which influence will never be quite recovered afterwards. As a last word on this branch of the subject, I would urge the necessity of not putting off till too late the preparation for temptation. As I said before, I have known boys of 14 to be quite experienced in vice, and it depends on the antecedents and surroundings of the boy whether the time of full knowledge comes early or late.

Great care should be taken about the influence of servants, both male and female, on the morals of young boys (and girls too). I think mothers who have sons should not employ reformed penitents in their houses without very strict inquiry into all their circumstances. They do not know what goes on without their knowledge, and that is an additional reason for fostering a spirit of entire confidence between parents and children, and never leaving the latter more than necessary to the companionship of servants.

It might be possible gradually to leaven society

with a different way of looking upon the sin of impurity, and of classing it with murder and theft, or, at least, with such swindling as does not come within the reach of the law, but yet is scouted by all except the refuse of the world.

As one means to this end, I have thought of the Church of England Temperance Society, which is now every week increasing in power and extent, sending out its branches into every county, and nearly every parish in the kingdom. I hope some day, if not soon, to induce the Central Society to advocate amongst all its branches what I may call the "whole catechism," and add chastity to soberness and temperance. The sin of impurity is very much bound up with that of intemperance, both as to cause and effect. Women are often brought to their ruin by drink, and after their fall, they drink to drown thought and conscience. I feel sanguine about eventual success in this direction, and am prepared to stand many a buffet, and many a defeat and refusal, before I give up that engine. The third avowed "special object" of the Church Temperance Society is, "the removal of the causes which lead to intemperance," and I am quite persuaded in my own mind that impurity is at least as great a promoter of intemperance as a coffee stall is a preventive of it, and therefore I submit that this work comes as much within the province of the Church Temperance Society as the promotion of coffee houses or stalls. I know that, at first sight, it may seem to many, more especially of the veteran temperance workers, that the undertaking of this would be going beyond their mission; for

when people have got into a steady groove of action, it is difficult to persuade them to come off the rails; but I think that, in time, the majority may be persuaded to search more deeply into the connection between the two subjects, and to see how much may be done for the glory of God by lending the aid of their powerful machinery to the cause of purity. I should propose to the Church Temperance Society that it should add to the present action expected from its members, both of the abstaining and non-abstaining sections, some such rules as the following:—

1. To keep the body in chastity of thought, word, and deed;
2. Never to laugh at obscene jests, or listen to impure talk;
3. To try to discourage such conduct in others by all quiet means;
4. Not to consort with men who are known to be unchaste, unless with the honest and reasonable hope of turning them from their sin;

and other such rules which could be formed after proper consideration, and modified according to circumstances.

Then pamphlets or leaflets on the subject may be written, and approval and stamp of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, Religious Tract Society, and other bodies, sought for them. These, carefully circulated amongst heads of families, would place the subject before them in a light in which, I am sure, it has never in many, if not most, places been considered.

Short addresses on the subject to boys might also be written, and circulated with the consent of the parents.

The task of reforming the views of society may seem an impossible or, at least, a Herculean one to attempt; but it is always best to aim as high as you can, and the very effort may touch some, and bring them to think more seriously of such matters. If all who think as I do on the subject would only bend themselves to the task with all their energies and thoughts, and with constant, hourly prayer to God for help, they would soon enlarge the circle, and by degrees draw other workers into it. Surely the spirit of Bishop Armstrong is amongst us—the wish, nay, the earnest longing to save the lost, and we should not quail at any difficulties, however great, in the way. I don't want to preach to the clergy, but I think that they might do a great deal towards shaping such a change in the opinions of society with regard to this sin, if they set themselves more sternly to rebuke it, and never, for any consideration; condoned it when persisted in by anyone, no matter how exalted his station. I have found good clergymen who are afraid either to preach themselves, or to allow others to preach in their pulpit, sermons on this subject; such, for instance, as for the support of penitentiaries. I have found, in these cases, that they had never heard a properly prepared sermon for that purpose, and they have had a sort of vague fear lest something “indelicate” might be said, that might shock the propriety of the congregation. I do not think that anyone who has heard a sermon of

this description by an experienced man, who treats the question in a judicious and educated manner, would ever have that fear again, but would be convinced that great good must arise from it. I know all the stock objections, for I have been the recipient of them: "You put bad thoughts into the heads of young girls who, but for that, would never have dreamed of such things." "People will talk the thing over outside, and discuss it amongst themselves with jokes and sniggering." "You will shock the propriety of the old ladies," &c., &c. As to young girls, I submit that such an argument as that quoted above is an entire assumption without evidence. Newspapers bring such matters more prominently before people, without the guarding element of religion, with which every sentence of the sermon should be pervaded. Novels are infinitely more suggestive. I have known young girls allowed to read novels written, I shame to say, as a rule, by women, in which the crime of unchastity, and even of adultery, is lightly spoken of as a sort of fate that comes upon people whether they like it or not; where coarse brutes of men, selfish, sottish, and given to every mean vice, are made out to be attractive to females, who are supposed to be all soul and gush, and to have power enough over them to draw them from purity, peace, and good name, to any kind of sin.

If the writers of such novels could only look into the future, and see the harm they are doing, if they could hear the laughter of the fiends to see their work done for them so deftly, if they could feel as they will when they stand before the

Throne, and see how many have been damned through their instrumentality, surely they would cut off their right hands rather than pen another line. As to the sermon encouraging people to talk over the matter with jokes, &c., I should think that a preacher must woefully fail of his mark, if such was the result of his sermon ; whilst the Holy Spirit might carry the warnings and pleadings into the inner heart of the careless sinner, and bless the sermon to his endless happiness.

Pastoral attention to parishioners, especially the younger ones, will work, in its own way, very much towards prevention. If the plan which has been suggested by many, and partly adopted by a few, were made general, of getting the younger parishioners to register themselves, and to ask for a sort of pass, when changing their residence or on going out to service, to the clergyman of their new parish, more hold would be got upon them ; they could always be traced out, they would feel that there was somebody near to whom they could apply for advice and sympathy when in trouble ; and many a poor girl's sad fate would be averted if, in the agony succeeding a first fall, she had some one to turn to for pity and help, who could mediate between her and her justly irritated parents, and get her taken home in time to be saved from utter despair, and the dreadful life of a prostitute. Many thousands of women could be saved just at that point. Most of them get to be nearly hopelessly incurable after a few years of prostitution, when the feelings have been blunted, early good influences and tendencies have been

obliterated, and drink has done its deadly work in stupefying the intellect, and deadening all the shame that familiarity with vice may have left.

Improved cottage accommodation is another means of prevention, by promoting and encouraging habits of decency and modesty. Everyone has heard the stories of rooms like that in which "Ginx's Baby" was born, ten, eleven, twelve, and even more sleeping together, huddled into groups of various ages and sexes. How can maidenly feeling be expected in the girl who is brought up in such a place, or any decency at all in either sex? Even to go a little higher in the social scale, or to go into the country villages, is not to see decency of habits. When the town artizan has his three rooms, he still puts boys and girls of fourteen or fifteen in the same room. The country cottager takes in male lodgers, who frequently seduce the girls of the house, and on this point I should like to urge the building of good model lodging houses for single men, a work that has been very sparsely taken up. The coffee houses now being started in many places might be a centre for these. Why not combine coffee house, working men's club, and lodging house for single men? If possible, add baths. There is a vast field for work in this direction, and I hope that the Church Temperance Society will not forget it when promoting coffee houses.

I will now sum up my present objects, and hope that I may induce the Church Penitentiary Association to encourage them, and stamp them with its approval. They are, shortly:—

1. To persuade the Church Penitentiary Association, and Church Temperance Society, to take up the work of prevention as well as cure;
2. To induce people in general to discard mistaken prudery in dealing with the subject, and more especially to convince fathers that the safer plan with their sons is to let them hear of the world's vices from themselves in the first place, to show them the darker side of the picture, and to enlist them on the right side;
3. To induce the clergy to face this vice openly, and to deal with it specially;
4. To interest all Christian men and women in the work of reclaiming our fallen sisters, and of removing all preventible causes of their fall.

But the main point towards which I wish to work, is the second in number of my "objects," as I think that to be, by a great deal, the most important. Fathers of England! you, who love your sons and are proud of them, remember that you will have to answer for it if you have not done all in your power to fit them for the battle of life. Do not let them go out unarmed and unwarned to meet all the snares which you know will beset them. Tell them of the wickedness of impurity in the sight of God; its unmanliness and cruelty to the poor wretches who supply food for the lust of men; the possible and even probable physical injury incurred by those who indulge their passions; how the desire for the sin is increased by its indulgence, and what an insult it

would be to mother or sisters to think of sully-
ing their pure lips with embraces contaminated by
the touch of a prostitute. Train up the little boy
beforehand to love and trust you; teach him by
precept and example to be ever courteous and
gentle to all women, more especially to his own
mother, for whom he should have a most tender
and reverential love: show him what true man-
liness and courage mean, and induce him to be
confidential with you, and, when away from
home, to write to you often, that he may feel the
link to be a pleasant and happy one. If you, by
these means, are instrumental in saving your boy
from impurity and other vices, you will have done
a good and holy work. You will probably have
prevented the fall of other boys through their
companions' example, and the ruin of confiding
women who would have been victims of their
licentiousness. And when you come to stand
before High God, you will see, when His jewels
are made up, how many (unsuspected by you)
were influenced by your work, and surely the
loving smile of your gracious Lord, His "Well
done, good and faithful servant," will be reward
enough for all your toil, all your anxiety.

WILLIAM H. HEATON.





